



Case Study: no. 39

The Aluminum Association

www.aluminum.org

A More Sustainable Site



ABOUT THE ALUMINUM ASSOCIATION:

The Aluminum Association is a global association focused on promoting aluminum as the most sustainable and recyclable material across a wide range of applications.

Organization: The Aluminum Association (AA)
Arlington, Virginia

Staff: 15

Operating Budget: \$6 million

Membership: 95 companies

Main Challenges: (1) Inefficient process for adding content to the association's website
(2) Lack of logical content architecture on the site

Main Goals: (1) Streamline processes for updating and maintaining content on the site
(2) Develop a more user-friendly website, both internally and externally

Timeline: 7 months (from vendor engagement to site launch)

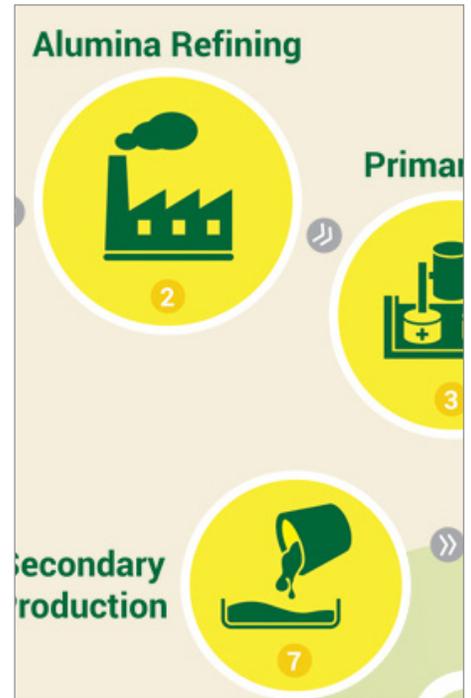
“We are proud of this site as the main voice of the industry in the U.S., and our members can be proud of it too.”

—Matt Meenan, Director of Communications, The Aluminum Association

When Matt Meenan began his tenure at AA almost two years ago, the need to update the organization's website in terms both design and functionality was evident. Meenan and one other staff person in communications do the bulk of the work on the website since close to 80 percent of its content is generated in their department.

“We have a couple of areas on the site that are more industry facing, such as chemical standards for alloys in aluminum and statistical reports,” he explained, “and other staff post that material.”

Prior to engaging Balance Interactive to manage the redesign of the website, posting content proved difficult for everyone. According to Meenan, the most apparent challenge with the old site was how tightly it was integrated with AA's association management system. “We had a website back-end that was severely out of date,” he said. “Simple tasks adding press releases to the old site could have taken an hour.”



“It was a major bottleneck for us with only two people managing the site, and it was updated very often,” he continued.

“We wanted to do more visual storytelling,” he continued. “This site helps us do that, and members like it quite a bit.”

Balance identified the disconnect between the needs of the organization and the architecture of the site. The design of the website proved non-intuitive, and content was neither optimized nor organized in a way that gave the organization the online presence it desired. Audience interviews indicated that the site was outdated, both in functionality and in content.

“I appreciated their responsiveness and making sure we were up-to-date on our deliverables throughout the process,” Meenan said. “They were focused in their communications and helped us stay on track with our aggressive timeline.”

Meenan acknowledged that content on the old site, which has been up about six years, “wasn’t organized very well and had no logical flow to it.” From a user perspective, navigating the site was a challenge as well, which caused member to complain or comment on how outdated the information on the site’s homepage was.

The new site enhances existing tools and provides structure for extension and further participation in advocacy and community building activities. The interface is visually compelling and intuitive and communicates the benefits of aluminum to both industry and non-industry users.

He credits Balance with helping to identify content management and migration as one of the majors tasks that needed to be completed as part of the redesign. With Balance’s help, AA developed a site (launched in February of this year) that is a valuable and engaging online resource for members, media, and aluminum influencers and thought leaders.

Further, the new site features several hundred pages of content versus the several thousand pages that was on the previous site. The new site is dynamic and accessible via mobile devices.

“The biggest benefit of the new site is ease of use,” Meenan emphasized. “Now we’re putting something new on the homepage about once a week.”

“We wanted to do more visual storytelling,” he continued. “This site helps us do that, and members like it quite a bit.”

KEY EXPERTISE PROVIDED BY BALANCE INTERACTIVE:

- Audience Analysis
- Content Management/Migration
- Search Engine Optimization
- Training for Internal Content Developers